

Digging for Clams and the Past

When spending time at beautiful Duxbury Bay, it's tempting to wax lyrical, search for deep meaning, launch a monologue on the water's quiet symbolism. However, we went quahog digging last Saturday and discovered that a quahog is a quahog is a quahog and a quahog by any other name would smell as sour.

We've been told that the Pilgrims would have died their first year, if not for quahogs. Ergo, we very well may owe our existence as a country, as the enchanting town of Duxbury, to them, and so are tempted, albeit briefly, to delve into the meaning of clams as the cradle of civilization, but no, once we hear the prong of a rake hit what sounds like a stone, we're not tossing that four-inch hard-shell back into the bay in thanks and recognition of the circle of life. We're tossing it into the rising pile of his brothers in the pail. We've

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got almost a dozen! They nourished our forefathers — perhaps they also nourished more than their bodies — yes, their souls — and by gum, they'll nourish us tonight with a shot of Tabasco Sauce and several turns of the pepper mill.

We could invest it with meaning; it's seductive to say a steamer, with its quick squirts and quicker diving, symbolizes the impossible dream for which we strive. But, a steamer is not a great white whale; a clam is not an old man's marlin or a father's pearl; it's a two-, maybe three-inch shell. We'd say our joy at raking one out of the wet sand is not the joy of clasping the unattainable, but the joy of outwitting that little son of a bivalve that had us digging with bare fingernails into the blackest, dankest sand.

We arrive at low tide, and leave as the tide rushes in — we don't leave at sundown, as orange clouds gather on a pink horizon. We're there an hour at most, until we've acquired enough quahogs to set up a powerful chowder, assuming we have enough spuds to go with, and sweet creamery butter, plus a Kendall Jackson chardonnay, chilled. Then we're back in the four-wheel drive bouncing along the dirt road with as many clams as we are allowed.

Let's just make sure to leave enough for our progeny — as our forebears did for us — so they too can know the joy inherent in a rake, a bucket and a valid clamming license.

Don't let that clamming license drop out of your pocket. It's your passport to history, our beginnings, back to merry olde England and the clam diggers of Sandwich and Canterbury.

So sorry. We tried. It's harder than we thought.